DEMANDS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY GRANTS.

DEMAND III.—EXCISE.

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): Sir, I rise to move for a grant not exceeding Rs. 204 for the appointment of a special excise staff at Changanachery in connection with the introduction of local option. As the House is aware, local option was ordered to be tried at Changanachery as an experimental measure. Orders were passed by Government to the effect about 8 months ago. But, somehow or other, the voting did not take place till Minam last. It was put off by the President for some reason or other. But, eventually, the voting took place on the 8th Minam and the results were announced. I feel very glad to be able to announce to the House that a large majority of the voters of the Municipality voted for the closing of the arrack shops and in accordance with the result of the voting Government were pleased to order the closing of the shops in the Municipal limits of Changanachery. There were four arrack shops on the whole and one foreign liquor shop. The arrack shops were not auctioned for the year but license was issued for the foreign liquor shop. In accordance with the orders of Government the arrack shops will remain closed till the end of 1105 and the license granted to the foreign liquor shop will be withdrawn as early as possible. It now remains to see that the people there do not indulge in illicit traffic. I want a special staff for that purpose. My proposal is to post a first grade Petty Officer and 4 peons, and the grant now asked for is to pay the staff for 3 months. The minimum quantity of jaggery arrack which a man can now possess is six drams and of cocoanut toddy arrack is 8 drams. The minimum is proposed to be reduced to 2 drams. In these circumstances, I would request the House to grant this demand.

MR. R. KESAVA PILLAI (*Kottarakara cum Kunnattur*): May I know whether the present staff is not sufficient for that work?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): I fear, not. The present staff consists of 2 Sub-Inspectors, 2 Petty Officers and 16 peons. They have jurisdiction over the whole Range.

MR. R. KESAVA PILLAI (*Kottarakara cum Kunnattur*): Is a special staff necessary for experimental operation?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): Yes, as long as the experiment continues.

MR. K. MADHAVAN PILLAI (*Trivandrum cum Nedivangad*): Does the special staff mean permanent or temporary staff?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): It is only temporary, as long as the experiment continues.

MR. A. THANU PILLAI (*Trivandrum*): What is the actual staff now within the town limit?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): Does the member want information for the Changanachery Range?

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MR. A. THANU PILLAI (*Trivandrum*): What I wish to know is, what is the staff available now for the locality where the local option is to be introduced?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): Practically none in respect of the area that is to be experimented on.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*): May I know the number of shops that were closed after taking votes?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): The shops were closed already at the beginning of the year.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*): May I know the number of shops that were closed after taking votes.

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): One foreign liquor shop.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*): Was there any illicit trade after that?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): That is my information.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*): Have the subordinates of the member complained to him about the insufficiency of the number of officers there?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): The voting took place only very recently and there was no occasion for making any such complaints.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*): The member says that 3 shops were closed from the beginning of the year. I wish to know whether, as a result of the closing of the 3 shops, there was any illicit trade from the beginning of the year?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): There was. But my officers were not able to devote much attention to that.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*): Who did not pay much attention?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): I mean the Excise staff, within the town limits.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*): What is their function then?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): Suppression of malpractices and collection of rentals within the whole Range. They were not able to pay undivided attention to this alone.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*): Without checking the inspection notes how did you get the information?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*): I myself was there and made enquiries about it.

MR. K. MADHAVAN PILLAI (*Trivandrum* cum *Nedumangad*): Are there no men in the reserve for special work of this character?

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MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*) : We have no men in the reserve for the purpose.

MR. A. THANU PILLAI (*Trivandrum*) : Sir, after hearing the Excise Commissioner, I am afraid, I should oppose the demand. Because local option has to be introduced in a small area now he asks for a considerable addition to the already existing staff. If the Excise Commissioner were prepared to say that because the work has to be done in a much more intensive scale than hitherto and because the officers are not quite accumstomed to work of this nature an additional staff is necessary in the beginning, one could understand that. But from what he said, I gather that this said additional staff will have to continue as long as the shops remain closed within that area. That leads one to entertain very great fears as to what the department will demand by way of expenditure when all the shops in the State will have to be closed at some time or other. The Excise Commissioner has not been able to tell the House what the number of men that have been working in this area is. I mean, with reference to the total number of men in the Range, he is not able to tell us the number of men that can be taken to be working in this area. Under these circumstances, I should consider that the existing staff should be able to put down whatever illicit traffic or illicit possession of liquor can be expected. His argument that the existing staff is not able to attend to this work is not convincing. By that I do not mean to say that latitude might be given to break the law. I am far from suggesting anything like that. The prohibition ought to be very strictly enforced there but that ought to be done with the existing staff. With these remarks, I oppose the demand.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara cum Kartikapalli*) : Sir, I rise to second the motion brought forward by Mr. Thanu Pillai, and I wish to explain my position particularly because I am a member of the Finance Committee which has passed this grant. I had my own doubts when this question was taken up in the Finance Committee, but since I wanted to get sufficient explanation from the Excise Commissioner himself in the open Council, I did not want that grant to be thrown out in the Finance Committee. Moreover, I thought that any opposition there will be stifling free discussion in the Council on the question of bringing into force prohibition, at least as regards the Changanachery Municipality. So, this item was passed in the Finance Committee. I fully endorse the views expressed by Mr. Thanu Pillai. The Excise Commissioner has stated that 3 shops were closed at the beginning of this year and that one additional shop alone was closed after the voting took place in Changanachery. When I asked him the number of offences that were detected he said that it was only one. He also said that, when he was there, his subordinates reported that case to him. That does not show that when three shops were closed the Excise administration was getting out of their hands and that they wanted more men. Now that one more shop is closed I think it will be better for the Excise Commissioner to try an experiment for the next three months and see whether the present staff will

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[Mr. A. S. Damodaran Asan.]

be able to combat the illicit trade. He will be able to find whether the present staff will be able to manage the affairs there. Otherwise it will be very difficult for us to come to this Council and suggest local option and temperance propaganda, because by that time the expenditure in the department will be going up and the income going down. So before we allow this item to be passed, I think, the Excise Commissioner should take the chance of trying to see whether he is able to manage with the present staff in the Changanachery Municipality. And if he finds that impossible we will consider the whole question at the time of the discussion of the general Budget.

MR. G. P. NILAKANTA PILLAI (*Karunagapalli*): I rise to support the demand of the Excise Commissioner. Local option has been introduced as an experiment in the Changanachery Municipality. The Commissioner says that as a result of this introduction illicit manufacture is going on and that with the staff that now exists there he is not in a position to combat illicit trade. Of course, I do not mind how far the expenditure of the department goes if he could free the country of this evil of drinking. Therefore, if by the addition of a few officers and staff he could free the country of this illicit manufacture and this evil of drink, I could heartily support any demand that may be proposed by him in regard to this matter.

MR. T. C. KESAVA PILLAI (*Kalkulam* cum *Vilavankod*): In supporting the grant moved by the Excise Commissioner, I have to say one word about Mr. Asan's observation that he left out his part of the duty as a member of the Finance Committee simply because he wanted the Excise Commissioner to speak in this Council. It is very funky on the part of Mr. Asan to have omitted to do his duty.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*): Does the member know that the Excise Commissioner was not a member of the Finance Committee and that we could not get an explanation from him?

MR. T. C. KESAVA PILLAI (*Kalkulam* cum *Vilavankod*): Everybody is expected to do his duty then and there and not to wait for another day.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*): I wanted that the Excise Commissioner should explain his position to me.

MR. T. C. KESAVA PILLAI (*Kalkulam* cum *Vilavankod*): There are other sources of information.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*): What are those sources?

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MR. S. PIRAVIPERUMAL PILLAI (*Commerce and Industry; South*) : Does the member know that the Finance Committee can summon the Excise Commissioner ?

MR. T. C. KESAVA PILLAI (*Kalkulam* cum *Vilavankod*) : Yes.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*) : Does the member know whether there was any occasion on which the Commissioner was summoned by the Committee ?

MR. S. PIRAVIPERUMAL PILLAI (*Commerce and Industry, South*) : May I know whether he could not do it ?

MR. T. C. KESAVA PILLAI (*Kalkulam* cum *Vilavankod*) : This Council was strongly urging for the stoppage of drink in municipal areas. Accordingly, Government kindly granted this local option and the public in a way succeeded in getting a large majority of votes. It is only a small grant that is asked for as an experimental measure and it is the duty of the Council to allow this small amount.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*) : Does the member know that this will lead to much bigger grants in future ?

MR. T. C. KESAVA PILLAI (*Kalkulam* cum *Vilavankod*) : I will object to it at that time. As this is only an indirect result of our wish we should allow this sum.

MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara* cum *Kartikapalli*) : Will it be fair on your part to oppose it when a bigger grant is necessary after we accept the policy now ?

MR. T. C. KESAVA PILLAI (*Kalkulam* cum *Vilavankod*) : For that time we will wait as the member has waited in the Finance Committee. What I say is that this is the result of our own exertions. So far as that particular municipal area is concerned only a small grant has been asked for. Nobody would come forward and say that as the area comes under the Taluk jurisdiction the existing staff should detect the cases, if there are cases within the municipal area. The Commissioner honestly confessed that there are drawbacks; as such it is our duty to allow the grant.

MR. MATTHEW MURIKKAN (*Vaikam*) : I rise to support the Excise Commissioner. I am also a member of the Finance Committee and therefore I think it is my duty to support the grant now. When the demand was made in the Finance Committee the necessity for it was openly explained by the members on the Government side then and there and the Excise Commissioner's explanation does not in any way enlighten us much more than we were enlightened at the time of the discussion in the Finance Committee. My friend Mr. Damodaran Asan said that it is difficult to pass the grant. It is true that some of the shops were closed at the beginning of the year. But when all the shops are closed there will be temptation for illicit distillation. It is only a question of degree.

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MR. A. S. DAMODARAN ASAN (*Mavelikara cum Kartikapalli*) : Will there be a greater tendency for illicit trade when some of the shops are closed ?

MR. MATTHEW MURIKKAN (*Vaikam*) : I would tell my friend that we will not be stingy to the Excise Commissioner for small amounts. His demand is very little. It is intended for ridding the country of the evil of drink. His explanation is very convincing. If all the shops are closed there will be a tendency for illicit distillation. This is only an experimental measure. Mr. Asan thinks that Government would be put to very great trouble when local option is introduced in all the towns. My friend need not expect local option to be introduced in all the towns tomorrow or the day after. But when it is introduced there will be a tendency for temptation. I would, for these reasons, support the Excise Commissioner's demand.

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*) : Sir, I confess that I did not expect any opposition from the other side. I was almost sure that the House would concede the grant asked for by me. With regard to the objection raised by Mr. Thanu Pillai, I wish to say a few words. The range is a pretty big one. There are about 47 toddy shops and seven arrack shops. There are only these men to take care of the preventive work. I am quite convinced that the Excise staff there will be quite unequal to the task of putting a stop to the illicit trade that is going on or is likely to go on in the town of Changanachery.

MR. A. THANU PILLAI (*Trivandrum*) : May I know the respective population of the range and of the town ?

MR. P. GOMATINAYAKAM PILLAI (*Excise Commissioner*) : I am sorry I have not got that information. While I was camping in those places I made very careful enquiries about the situation in Changanachery. A case of possession of two gallons of liquor was found in a man's house and that was detected by the local officers. I am sure that they are not paying much attention to this matter for the simple reason that they could not do it. In view of their legitimate duties of collecting rentals and going about the whole range and detecting malpractices, they could not find time for this. Under these circumstances, I thought a special staff who would keep watch over the doings of these smugglers morning, evening and night and put a stop to this was absolutely necessary. My submission is that, unless there is a staff to watch the doings of these smugglers, the experiment would be more or less a farce. The people have signified their intention of not having these shops opened. What would be the effect ? If the people follow their votes and refrain from drink it would be good ; but if they do not do so and bring illicit liquor it must be prevented. My submission is that if the experiment is to prove a success, this staff is very necessary. I would request my friend to withdraw the opposition.

MR. A. THANU PILLAI (*Trivandrum*) : I withdraw my objection.

The motion was put and the demand was granted.

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